

The Beginning is the End

by Copper

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>I'm sure by now you're tired of hearing about time traveling stories. But this isn't just any story. It's my story. And when I get involved, things just get weird. It all started one wintry day....

> It was snowing outside, the first snowfall of the season, even though it was January. The seniors had neglected to leave the heat on for us lowly sophomore Humanitarians, and needless to say, it was quite cold. I, along with Maryann, Stephanie, Joanna, Jessie, Laura and Lauren, sat on the heater in the back of the room to warm up. Gallacher and two outspoken students were in the middle of a heated debate about a poem we were "reading." The others were either spinning a globe around or gossiping. I looked around, taking in my surroundings and with a wry grin, I thought, "Welcome to Humanities. Home of the Procrastinators."
 Aware of all the conversations around me, I glanced at the clock. It struck twelve, and the second hand began twitching back and forth as it made its way around the clock. Entranced, I watched it. Watching the clock was a daily thing, but I had never seen it do that before. For a full minute, I watched the second hand as it lazily made its way around in a circle, twitching nervously back and forth. When the minute expired, I blinked to regain my vision, having watched the clock so intently. "I'll have to watch it again tomorrow," I decided.

> Just then, someone hit me. "Hey! Wake up!" a voice hissed.
 I looked up. Gallacher was looking at me expectantly with an amused expression. "Well?"

> "Um..." Trying to think fast, I said, "Yeah, I agree."
 Gallacher started chuckling. "You agree that Davey and Jack are together?"

> "What?! No! Um, wait, wha?!"
 The class started laughing. I looked around and realized, besides Gallacher, no one I knew from

Humanities was there. Oh wait! There was Jo! But who was she talking to? One of the girls she was talking to was tan. Really tan. Almost as if she lived in the sun year round. Either that or she had moved into a tanning salon. She had brown hair with clearly visible blond highlights and her eyes were this cool color, both blue and green. The other girl was taller than Joanna and the tan girl, and it looked like she worked out a lot. She had shoulder length straight brown hair that was so shiny, light was reflecting off of it. Her eyes were hazel. They both seemed familiar but I couldn't place where I knew them from.

> "Jessica must've-"
 "Copper!" yelled various people.

> "Her name is Copper! For the last time, Jo!" yelled a curly redhead with green eyes, pale skin and freckles. One could sense her temper about to erupt like a volcano. At the moment, I was attempting to figure out how they knew I was Copper and why we were talking about Jack and Davey.
 "Flame, calm down," a brunette said, with long hair and green eyes.

> FLAME?! What?! How did Flame end up here?! My thoughts were speeding through my mind as I tried to rationalize what was going on. I looked back to the girls sitting next to Jo and realized that the shiny haired girl had an owl charm on her necklace. "Owl?" I mumbled.
 She looked up and gave me a questioning look. "Yeah Copper?"

> I meant to say something but all that came out was a squeak. I ran to the door to see if it was the same school. It was. Slowly, I walked back to my seat on the furnace, taking a good look at the others in the classroom. I realized that the other girl next to Jo must be West. "The one who had told Flame to calm down must be Filly," I thought. Next to her was a pale girl with long hair that looked as if it could be a coppery color, blond, or brown depending on her location. She looked rather short and was quite thin. Since she was with Flame and Filly, I figured it was Shady.
 Across from them, six girls sat. Most of them were shorter than me, but they seemed older. The first one I noticed had long red hair. She was thin but curvy. Her eyes were hazel and she was in an argument with a brown haired girl with blue eyes about something to do with tutoring. The conversation was strangely familiar, and I realized that they were Shasta and Patch respectively. A pale girl with long dark blond hair and glasses was talking animatedly with a thin girl who had brown hair with blond highlights and hazel eyes. They were singing a song that sounded strangely like, "It's Raining Men." They looked up at me and burst into hysterical gales of laughter. No question who they were. Lily and Pearl. Next to Pearl, a girl with a pale moon face, long jet black hair and auburnish eyes was doodling a few sketches in her notebook and they were really good too. "That must be Luna," I figured. The last girl looked small, but had long golden brown hair with brown eyes. She was busy writing a letter and I noticed the name Wisecracks. Cone!

> Not far from them, another five sat. The class was basically like Humanities, except in Humanities, we actually have two guys. Gallacher was talking to two of the five girls and they were in a heated debate. One was a tall blond with long, curly hair and blue eyes, and the other was a direct contrast to her, short with straight dark hair that almost looked black and dark eyes. They both looked determined and I decided they were Daphne and Jewel. The girl I easily recognized as Sweetwaters had long dirty blond hair with those cool blue-green eyes was trying frustratedly to do all her work. I chuckled as the papers on her desk flew off. A short girl with short brown hair and bluish greenish eyes was having a quiet, serious conversation with another short girl. This one looked Asian, with jet black hair and light brown eyes. She was eating an apple. Apple! And

Jewels!
 Last but not least, sitting next to where I had been sitting, two girls had been clucking and glomping at each other. Catching the attention of the entire class, they continued, unaware of their audience. A bewildered look resided on Gallacher's face and not soon after, the "Chicken" and "Spam" recognized their audience.

> "Uh..." the Chicken drawled.
 "HI!" piped in the Spam.
> I looked around to see where their containers were, but they were nonexistent. "Boy, I could use one of Dee's huggy coats right about now. Make that two," I murmured.
 It didn't take much to figure out who they were. Clink and July. Clink had wavy light brown hair with red and blond highlights, with blue eyes that sometimes looked green. July had auburn hair with aqua eyes. They were both short. I'm tall. I imagine we must've looked quite interesting together. By then, everyone had returned to what they had been doing. I sat down, feeling lost. What am I talking about?! I live in lost!
> On the board, it said, "Davey and Jack: Friends? Or more?"
 "Newsies class is the best!" July whispered.
> Jo, who had overheard her, complained, "No it's not! It's all about Newsies!"
 "Shut up Jo!" It seemed like the class was reading a script. They all said that at the same time.
> "If you dislike it so much, why don't you just quit?!" muttered Shady. Jo glared at her and was about to say something (most likely nasty) back to her, but some guy ran in. He had light brown hair and was tall.
 "JO!" he cried.
> She jumped up startled. "Pierre?!" she gasped.
 "Come with me Jo! Please?" he deplored of her.
> A smile broke out on her face. "Of course!" She ran to him, took his hand and ran off with him as the background music swelled. Hold it! Background music?! I believe they ran off to the boys' bathroom, and they never appeared again. I'm not sure what they were doing in the boys' bathroom, and quite frankly, I don't want to know.
 Gallacher sat there and shrugged. He returned to his debate with Jewel and Daphne.
> I sat there for a minute, attempting to make sense of it all. It didn't work. "Ya know," I said to myself, "This is all a dream. Someone's gonna hit me-"
 Someone hit me. That someone was Clink.

> "Ow!" I yelped. I turned to face the grinning Clink. "Why'd ya do that?"
 "You said, 'Someone's gonna hit me'. So I hit you."
> "Oh." I was silent for a minute. But seeing as how that's rarely possible, I had to say something. Besides, wasn't I supposed to have woken up? "So why am I still here?"
 July gave me a weird look. "Because...we have school..."
> "What's the matter with ya Copper?!" Lily asked. Apparently, now I was the display instead of the two delicacies. Step right up ladies and gentlemen and view the eighth wonder of the world-the girl who was in class and once knew where she was who is now in class but doesn't know where, yet knows everybody anyway! Hmm. Did I end up in the cast of Cheers unknowingly, with an all new cast and set? I mean the theme song suits me perfectly, there's only one slight problem. Where in heck was I?! Okay, you know what? Maybe I'm hallucinating. Someone could've slipped something into my Sprite. Or maybe it was a defective case. Yeah, that's it. Go with it and just let it wear off. Just do me one favor. Remind me never to drink Sprite again, will ya? Muchly obliged.

> The bell rang and I snapped out of my trance. Geometry was next, right? I can understand how we were all in the same class if it was Newsies, but there's no way we're all in geometry together. Our ages range from twelve to eighteen! Without a doubt, we're not all in the

same class.
 "C'mon Copper, let's go!" Daph said, slightly impatiently.

> "You're in my geometry class?" I asked.
 "Since September..." she trailed off.

> "With Ms. Eachus?"
 "The one and only, thank God, Ms. Poof!" joked Sweetwaters as she got all her stuff. That caused several of us to laugh. Ms. Eachus had poofy hair and it was really outdated. Shady hit me in the shoulder and asked, "Ya comin'?" I nodded and looked to see who was accompanying me. They were Sweetwaters, Daphne, Shady, Flame, Clink and July.

> I had to stop off at my locker and get my books and as I did so, they either waited for me or headed off to their locker. We reunited a minute later and headed on down to the C Wing, which was at the other end of the school. At this point, I had given up on returning home. I, unlike Dorothy, did not have red sparkly shoes that could grant my wish. And there were no lamps around that could possibly present to me a genie. Although there was a flowerpot. So really, all I could do was go along with the others and hope that somehow I'll get back.
 I dropped my books onto my desk and looked at the board. The question was "If Jack is on the gate and it is 21 feet high, and the angles are 30-60-90, then how far is Racetrack from the gate?" My mouth dropped open. Newsies? In Geometry?!

> "Is there a problem?" Ms. Poof-er, Eachus asked.
 "Oh, uh, no, everything's fine," I replied. With a sigh, I solved the problem. He was 12.12 feet away. Like you really needed to know that. The rest of the problems were along that line. Thankfully, the bell rang.

> Next was Spanish. The same people from Geometry came except for Clink and Daphne. Clink was in Advanced Spanish Three, and Daphne took French. Just then, Owl walked in.
 "What happened?" Sweetwaters asked.

> "He smiled at me!" she said dreamily. Everyone groaned, as I tried to figure out who. Itey? No, he smirks. Skittery! Ah-hah! I'm smart! All you people who are laughing at me right now, I have one thing to say. Shut up.
 "Uh, excuse me!" my Spanish teacher said angrily. "I don't appreciate your not being in your seats five minutes after the bell rang!" Oy, not this again. She launched into her daily lecture about observing timeliness and acting appropriately, and I had heard it so often, I began mimicking her.

> " 'This is Spanish class, not a class to slack off in. I'd appreciate it if you'd take it ser-' Er...Hi Mrs. Tague." She glared at me. "Uh, I was only doing that, so I could make sure I was able to write it for future reference. I need something to write about after all!" She scowled. Meekly, I asked, "I'm sorry?" She spun around, back to her desk, where she made an announcement.
 "I'd like you to write the opening monologue in Spanish..." I tuned her out, just as Flame hit me.

> "What?" I whispered.
 "Nice attempt," she whispered back with a mocking smile. I scowled at her and returned back to my work.

> "En 1899..." I began. Forty minutes later, the bell rang. Ahhh...the sweet taste of freedom. I love it.
 "C'mon!" July said impatiently.

> I looked at her. "Where are we going? I gotta catch my bus."
 She looked at me strangely. "It's Friday...we always go out on Fridays."

> "It's Friday? But before it was Wednes..." I trailed off, seeing the confused faces of the group that had just reunited. "Uh-huh."
 "Are you okay Copper?" Luna asked concernedly.

> "Um, yeah, I think so. I'll be fine," I said honestly.
 "Okie." Luna immediately shrugged off her concerns and changed the subject. "D'ya guys wanna go to the fair?"

> "Are the guys gonna be there?" Shasta asked eagerly.
 Cone giggled. "They'd better!" That got a few chuckles. As for me, I wasn't sure of who they were talking about.

> "What guys?" Goodbye nice people, hello firing squad.
 "You know, Jack, Race, Blink, Mush..." Patch said slowly. "You know, those guys?"

> "They're here?!" I squeaked. A nod confirmed my query. "Oh."
 "So are we going or what?" West asked. Cheers erupted from the usually slaphappy group. "Guess so!" she said with a grin.

> "Meet back here in five minutes?" the quiet Apple asked. More nods, then the sound of shuffling feet.
 My locker was located by Lily's and Filly's, so we walked together. They yakked for a couple of minutes, as I replayed the day's events in my mind. Woke up, went to school, took a chem test, went to most of my class, ate lunch, ended up in a parallel universe, wrote letters. Nah, nothing unusual.

> "Copper?" Lily asked, rescuing me from my mind. Do you think there's a way to turn off your brain so you couldn't have such a vivid imagination? I didn't think so either. I'm a prisoner of my own thoughts. Help!
 "Yeah?" I asked.

> "Can ya do me a favor
 "Sure, what is it?"

> "This year, can you not push me off the docks again? I liked having Dutchy save me, but I looked like a wet rat."
 Filly giggled. "A pretty wet rat!" Lily rolled her eyes, but she couldn't help smiling.

> I grinned and asked, "Shall we?" I could get used to this.
 "We shall!" Filly declared.

> We set off to meet by the front entrance singing, "We're Off To See The Wizard" at the top of our lungs. Sure, we got some curious looks, but hey, if it's fun, who cares?
 We were skipping down the stairs, waving hi to various people. Every so often, you'd hear a "Hey Trapper!" or "Hi Mooch!" or even a crazed cry of "DAMSEL!!!" Things of that sort. Filly stopped for a second to ask Spades Fia something, so me and Lily talked while we waited for her. Just then, a major David Moscow lookalike walked by, looking like Moscow did in the movie. He gave me a slight smile and continued walking.

> I gasped and startled Lily. "What's the matter?"
 "Tell me I'm seeing things. Just tell me I'm seeing things," I mumbled.

> "Okay, you're seeing things," she said with a smile.
 "What did you see?" Filly asked, having finished her conversation.

> "Davey..." I trailed off.
 "Yeah, so?" asked Lily.

> "How did David Moscow get here?" I wondered aloud.
 "I think you mean David Jacobs," Lily said. "As for how he got here, he goes to school here, remember? And since when do you quote Spot Conlon?"

> I nodded as if I understood although I didn't, and disregarded the second part of her questions. A minute later, I was still nodding. Filly rolled her eyes at me, grabbed my arm and basically dragged me away.
 "OW!" I complained.

> "It's good for ya Copper. At this point, you deserve a mallet over the head. Whatsa mattah with you today?! Jeez!" Lily stated. Before I had a chance to respond, I found myself in the middle of many giggling girls, busy gossiping, laughing or just talking.
 Just then a shrill whistle blew. All heads turned to Flame.

> "Yeah?" July said.
 "Are we going?" Flame asked.

> "Yeah, yeah, yeah," grumbled Luna.
 The mob began moving slowly to the park nearby and as we walked, everyone ended up splitting into groups. Not surprisingly, I found myself with July and Clink.

> "Turkey! Space turkey!" Clink giggled.
 "Ya got a problem wit dat, Chicken?" I emphasized the word with a mock glare.

> "Yeah. Yeah I do!" Clink said, drawing herself to her full height of 5'2" glory.
 "So whaddya gonna do?" I threatened jokingly.

> Clink pretended to think for a minute. "Spam ya!" July screeched as Clink pushed her into me and we all started giggling.
 "Oh no! My feathers are molting!" I cried, pretending to restick myself with imaginary feathers. That got us hysterical and we sat on a bench to recollect ourselves. Those who had noticed our antics gave us a strange look.

> "Don't worry 'bout us, we'll catch up later!" July said weakly, gasping for air in between laughter. They kept walking.
 A moment later, a shadow was imposed on the concrete sidewalk in front of us. We looked up to see Spot, Mr. High and Mighty himself. He scowled. "What are you three freaks doin'?"

> The comment didn't mean much to me or Clink because we knew it was generally directed to July. I was starting to feel like I belonged there strangely enough, and Clink and I stepped to the side. Something told me that Spot and July were always fighting about something, and it was ironic because everyone knew how much they liked each other, except for them. Whoa! Hold on a second! How did I know all this? Is it possible we were really in a parallel universe and there were two of each person, one in each universe? Then that would mean I wasn't one of a kind. Neither was anyone else for that matter. Poor sextuplets. Twelve people, all looking exactly like each other must be tough on them...What am I talking about?! I'm probably the only one...er...two? who knows about the alternate universe!
 So if I was here, then that meant my alternate self was there. Which is probably why I knew all the stuff I knew. The rest would probably come to me later...WOW! Heavy duty stuff! For a minute, I wasn't sure if it was my brain coming to the conclusions I had arrived at, or something else. I decided it was me. Go me! I am smart after all! But everything was just so weird. I mean, two universes?! Who knew?!

> "You're such a jerk Spot. Go find someone else to bother. I'm not interested," July said, glaring at him.
 "Why thank you slut," Spot said mockingly. "I ain't interested either, but we have some business to settle."

> "What business is that?" July smirked, knowing fully well what it was.
 He scowled. "The stuff you made up 'bout me."

> July was enjoying Spot's discomfort. Innocently, she asked, "What stuff?"
 Looking at the ground, he mumbled, "You know, the limp noodle stuff."

> "What? I couldn't hear you." Oh she heard him. But we didn't.
 "The limp noodle stuff, b*tch!" Spot said rather loudly. We heard him. I braced myself for what I knew was coming. Sure enough, Clink hit me.

> "Ow," I muttered. Like it mattered. "You really should consider an anger management class. Violence is not the solution," I told her. She glared at me, then hit me again.
 "Spot said limp noodle!" she hissed.

> "Didn't we say that was his porn star name?" I wondered.
 "Yeah. But he said limp noodle!"

> "And your point is?" That got another hit. My arm was turning red from her. I think she's a little too slaphappy. Literally.
 We turned our attention back to Limp Noodle-er Spot and July. July was having a tough time not laughing, and Spot was getting nastier.

"Cause of you, no girl wants ta come near me now," he fired.

> "You did that all on your own," she shot back.
 A smirk came to rest on his face. "Now I get it."

> "Get what?" July was confused. As usual.
 "Why ya made up that limp noodle stuff."

> "Why?" she challenged.
 "Cause ya want me all to yourself. You want it, and you know it."

> "Wow. Spot's actually right for a change. She knows it. Too bad his ego's so inflated, he won't admit that he wants her as much as she wants him. Communication people. It makes the world go 'round!" I commented. Clink giggled and we returned to the latest development of Two Egotistical People Who Want Each Other But Are Too Dumb To Do Anything About It.
 "Oh yeah Spot," July said sarcastically. "I want you. I need you. I must have you. You're so sexy it makes me want to cry. Take me. Take me now. Please."

> "She speaks the truth," Clink noted, nodding her head like a wise old scholar. I giggled, watching those two was always fun.
 Spot glared at July. "Just stop telling people that crap. If they still believe you by the way, I'll prove to 'em it ain't true."

> Uh oh. Not a good thing. Deciding we needed to break it up, I yanked Clink over to July. "C'mon, we're gonna be late."
 July nodded, her eyes expressing her fury and spun around. She walked off, in the direction of the fair. Clink and I shared a mutual look of exasperation before running after her.

> "C'mon July, he's a jerk. Don't worry about it," Clink said. July kept walking, staring straight ahead. When she got into those kinds of moods, it took a lot to get her out of it. We walked in silence until we reached the entrance. Everyone had been lounging around, waiting for us.
 "There you are!" Pearl exclaimed. "We were getting worried!"

> "Well I appreciate the concern Mom, but you didn't have to wait for us!" Clink said.
 Pearl grinned, then noticed July's dour expression. "What happened?" she asked, worried.

> "Spot and July got into another argument," I explained.
 "Ohhh." Pearl nodded her understanding. "She gonna be okay?"

> We nodded.
 "So we gonna go on rides or what!" cried Jewels.

> I grinned. "Hell yeah!"
 "Copper..." Jewel warned.

> "Sorry!" I called.
 "Roller coaster anyone?" a voice asked.

> "Tink!" cried West. "When did you get here?"
 "Just now," she grinned. "Now where is that Skittery?" She pulled out one of those retractable sticks and slapped it in her hand. "He could use some discipline!"

> Owl laughed. "Let me take care of that!" she said jokingly.
 Tink pretended to cry. "But I wanted to!" We all laughed at that until another voice said, "Wanted to what?"

> "Hit Skitts," Cone said. Then she realized who it was. "Monday!"
 Monday cackled. Then she cracked up.

> "Nice Monday," commented Luna.
 Monday grinned. "Thanks."

> "So who's going on the roller coaster with me?" Shasta asked.
 "I am!" Tink declared.

> "So am I!" called Luna.
 After we had finished stating whether we're riding the roller coaster or not, the groups were as follows:

>
Roller Coaster: Luna, Cone, West, Sweetwaters, July, Daph, Jewels, Shasta, Filly, Flame, Tink and me.

>Other: Clink, Apple, Jewel, Owl, Lily, Patch, Pearl, Shady and Monday.

> We parted our ways and headed off to the roller coaster.
 "When are the guys gonna get here?" Shasta complained.

> Our official spokesperson for the guys, Daphne, flipped her hair and started acting like a blond ditz. "Like, ohmigosh! I can't believe they're not here yet! They promised to like, be here! What are we gonna do? Like, we can't like live without them! Ohmigosh!"

She gave Shasta a look and rolled her eyes. "They'll be here soon. Between three and four, I think."
 I looked at my watch. 3:47. Boy, time sure does fly.

> In defense, Shasta cried, "I don't act like that!"
 "Uh huh," said Jewels unconvinced. " 'It's the same sun as here!' " she mimicked. Shasta blushed, then remembered she had her water bottle and threw some water at Jewels. Jewels yelped at the frigidity of the water, then retaliated by pushing Shasta into the pond behind her. It was then I realized it was extremely warm for January. Since when do I wear tank tops and jeans in January? Usually I wear a sweater and jeans...

> "What month is it?" I asked Cone.
 "June," she said distractedly. She was watching the now soaked girls battle it out playfully. Pardon me while I quote Timon: "DID I MISS SOMETHING HERE?!" Now I must break into my rendition of "Can You Feel The Love Tonight." Caaan you feeeel, the loove to-okay, okay, you don't have to get down on your knees and cry! I know when to take a hint! The things I do for you people...

> So let's get this straight. It's still 2000, but now it's June, on a Friday when it was once Wednesday, and it's 3:48 in the afternoon, even though school let out at two. I know it does not take an hour and a half to get to a park a half mile from the school. Shall I wait for the Twilight Zone theme to start playing?
 And now back to you, Shasta and Jewels! Oh wait. They're both in the pond still, soaking wet might I add. They were still bickering and I rolled my eyes. Just then, Tink sashayed up to the bank of the pond, and to our amusement, did a dead-on impersonation of Shasta.

> "Oh my gawd, Jack is sooo hot," Tink drawled, twirling her neck. "He's soo sexy and like, I want his bod. His hair is gorgeous and I could look into his eyes for like, forever! He needs a girl like me to keep him in good shape," she continued, rubbing her neck slowly.
 Shasta's face was bright red and I was actually able to figure out why. Right behind Tink was Jack with an amused expression. He looked at Shasta expectantly and she gave an embarrassed grin. Tink was still performing, when Cone said, "Tink...Behind you."

> Tink spun around to see Jack, looked back at Shasta and cracked up. I didn't know it was possible, but somehow Shasta was redder than before. Just then Jack walked into the pond and offered Shasta a helping hand with a cocky grin. She gratefully accepted it and Jewels teased, "Oooooohhh!"
 Shasta glared at Jewels and shot her a dirty look, threatening her with her half full water bottle. Jewels laughed and asked, "I'm already wet, what more can you do me?" Shasta dumped the entire contents of the bottle over Jewels head, causing Jewels to scream from its ice cold temperature. "I just had to ask," she muttered. It was like "Whose Line Is It Anyway?" but with more spontaneity. Needless to say, we all found that quite funny.

> Somehow we reached the roller coaster, but not before picking up a couple of unexpected guests. Shasta and Jack were walking slowly behind, talking in low voices so we basically ignored them, until a soft, low voice called, "Hey Jack."
 I was about to look to see who it was when Cone caught my attention. She seemed to jump to attention, her eyes became brighter and she seemed to radiate a glow. Did she visit the microwave often? I wondered. Just then she yelled, "MUSH!" which automatically explained her suddenly alienlike qualities.

> Mush grinned like a little boy. Aww, how cute. "Cone!" he cried. As if in some parody of a romantic film, they ran to each other, Cone literally jumped into his arms as he swung her around and as they kissed, "Where You Are" began playing. What in the?! I don't even like that song!
 Filly rolled her eyes, but when she saw Crutchy,

she couldn't help but smile. "Hey Crutchy!" Crutchy crutched (new word, I claim all rights) over to her with a grin and said, "Heya Filly!"

> As I watched, Snitch, Race, Dutchy and Spot suddenly appeared. Snitch headed straight for Luna, Race and West flirted playfully, while Dutchy and Daphne talked. They were best friends, had been for some while. In fact it was Daphne who introduced Lily to Dutchy and vice versa. But that's another story. Tink and Skittery were laughing about something, but you could tell their relationship was strictly platonic. Specs had pulled Sweetwaters away from the group and let's just say they were quite self-involved.
 That left me, July, Flame and Jewels. We were having a great conversation about what a spork is really. The possibilities ranged from a double agent to the key meant for a secret doorway in a closet leading to another land. Just then July scowled and muttered, "What does that jerk want?" I looked up and saw the King of All That is Good and Right (not).

> "Heya girls," he smirked, as though we should be honored to have him in our presence.
 "Yeah Conlon?" Jewels asked with narrowed eyes. July watched his every move like a cat ready to pounce but when she met his gaze, she looked down quickly, embarrassed at having been caught watching him. Spot watched her for a couple of seconds before remembering what he came over for.

> "Wanna go out with me-?" July's head shot up and she had a confused expression on her face. With a sneer at July, he finished.

"-Flame?"
 July looked as though she was ready to kill him and if Jewels and I hadn't restrained her, unbeknownst to Spot, she probably would have.

> Flame looked at him in surprise, then nodded coolly. "Sure." She didn't know about July's crush on him.
 Spot grinned and said, "Good. Now that that's settled..." He leaned over and gave her a kiss, right in July's face. "Let's do something."

> Flame grinned and said, "Well we were just about to go on the roller coaster."
 Coolly, Spot said, "Cool. You'll sit next to me, right?" Flame shot a questioning look at July, they had agreed to sit together. July shrugged so Flame nodded. "Good." He put his arm around Flame's shoulder and led her away.

> July kept her cool, but barely, until Spot was far away. She turned to Jewels and I with teary eyes. "I hate him so much, but I like him so much. Why?" We tried to comfort her and Jewels said, "Don't worry, I'll sit with ya! You won't be alone."
 July gave a slight smile through her tears, and I tried to make light of the situation by cracking, "Nah, ya won't be alone. I will!"

> "Ya don't have to be," said a voice out of nowhere. I looked at July and Jewels, who were looking around uncomfortably. Who was mystery manboy and what did he mean by that?

> I turned around slowly, and to my pleasant surprise, it was Davey. "Hey," I croaked. My throat went dry and I swallowed hard nervously. He grinned with a friendly smile and said, "I don't have anyone to ride with either. Wanna ride together?"
 July snickered, and I coulda sworn I heard her say, "Well it's a better line than 'David? As in David and Goliath?' " I shot her and Jewels a dirty look, then heard myself say, "That'd be cool." Sheesh, I can't even keep track of where I am, where do I get off deciding that it would be okay to sit with him on a ride?! What if I actually screamed on this ride (which I never do) and popped his eardrum or something? What if I seemed like a total dork and was the most boring person he's ever met? What if-okay, enough with the what ifs. Being a worrywart is not in my future.

> Somehow we had reached the line for the coaster. The signs suggested a twenty minute wait, which was pretty good. As I always

do, I jumped up onto the railings that divide the line and sat swinging my legs, holding on to the railing. Fall off those things hurt man! Davey leaned on the divider across from me and we had an interesting conversation about books such as, "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" and "Alice in Wonderland" and other classics. He surprised me, because he knew what I meant and had some good comments. Yes I'll admit it. Guys who are smart are cool and I always end up falling for 'em. I know what you're thinking. Stop laughing! It's not that funny! I dunno why I bother, you people are so cruel. Well except for Wisecracks. She sorta knows where I'm coming from. Nice person, but she scares me sometimes.
 So anyways, it didn't take long to get on the ride. I'm not sure how, but we all managed to git on one ride. Jack and Shasta sat together, Luna and Snitch were next to them. West and Sweetwaters sat with Race and Specs, July and Jewels sat with Tink and Skitts, Flame and Spot sat with Filly and Crutchy, Cone and Mush with Daph and Dutchy and Davey and I ended up getting a whole row to ourselves. If you didn't get it by now, each seat held four people. It was one of those legs free rides. It rocked. As we went down the first hill, as if it were pre-planned, all the girls screamed, "SULLIVAAAAAAAAN!"

> You could hear Jack's yell of shock all the way to the last car which is where we were sitting. We all cracked up, as Shasta asked Jack, "Is there something I should know?"
 Tink began singing "Roller Coaster" and pretty soon we were all singing along, then it changed to the theme song from Lambchops' Playalong and we just began "dancing" in our seats. Fun schtuff.

> Sadly, the ride ended and we got off. There were no more roller coasters in the fair, so we had to figure out what to do.
 "Water rides?" suggested Dutchy.

> "Bumper cars!" yelled Jack.
 "The swing ride!" volunteered Cone.

> "Sky ride!" crowed West.
 Rides were continuously called out until Davey winked at me and asked, "What about the Haunted House?"

> Seeing the possibilities of a ride in the dark, my hormonally charged friends tried to play off their enthusiasm with a simple nod or shrug or "Yeah, that sounds cool." Those that weren't with a guy grumbled, but agreed to come anyway.
 Imagine our surprise when we discovered the others there waiting in line. They had picked up Jake (whose old style bowler hat was presently on Clink's head), Pie Eater, Bumlets, Blink, Boots, Swifty, Shaker and Itey. Patch had an adorable teddy bear that apparently Blink had won for her. I looked around to see how many people were there. There was Shasta and Jack, with Shasta leaning against him; Flame and Spot flirting furiously while he stole looks at July to see her reaction, but July pretended to ignore them while talking to Monday and Pearl; Daphne, Lily and Dutchy were talking about the best places to eat; Clink and Jake were talking to Apple and Pie Eater; Crutchy was leaning against the railing and smiling as Filly whispered something to him; Patch was showing her teddy bear off to Cone while Blink and Mush were talking sports; Race had a piece of paper with what looked like listings of racehorses at the local racetrack at which he worked and was trying to explain the concepts of betting to West, Boots, and Jewels; Tink, Owl, Skittery and Itey were laughing at something Swifty had said; Luna, Jewel, Bumlets, Snitch, Sweetwaters and Specs seemed to be talking about their plans for the weekend; Davey was watching everything around him and making comments about the other rides to Shaker and Cake, and then there was me.

> Hold on. Backtrack a bit. When did darlin' ol' Cake end up here?! "Cake!" I cried.
 She looked at me. "Yeah?"

> "When did ya get here?"
 "A little while ago. Apple told me to come, so I did. I woulda been in school, but I had auditions," she said. I nodded, used to my random states of confusion. Who was I to question the ongoings of this newly discovered world.

> Just then I realized the ride was awaiting us. It began as a small theater that eventually led to one car after another weaving through the building. It seated forty people at one time and we made thirty nine. Make that forty. Snipeshooter just appeared, much to Pie's chagrin. He didn't need his little brother reporting all his activities, especially now that Apple was here. Luckily, Snipes headed for Boots to talk computer games.
 We all trooped in, pairing off since this ride required only two people per seat. Guess who I sat with? Yep, aren't you the smart one!

> We sat down, waiting for the ride to start. There was an awkward silence between Davey and myself until creepy piano music began playing. He leaned over and whispered, "Well this should be interesting!" I grinned and leaned back into the soft plush seat to enjoy the ride. As far as I knew, we were only friends.
 The "film" consisted of an old-style silent film based on a horror film. Just as it was about to end, a bright light began flashing. It was so intense, I had to close my eyes because the light hurt. Just before I did, I saw people covering their eyes, the guys holding the girls in their arms as if to shield them from an invisible attacker and people were huddled. Now that my eyes were clenched tight, I heard a few cries of pains as I felt Davey pull me closer to him. I buried my face in his shoulder until I felt that the light was gone.

> The searing heat I had felt was gone and I opened my eyes slowly, unsure of what had happened. I felt the warm sun beating down on me, but if I had been indoors, how could that be possible? I blinked softly, and as things came into focus, I saw Davey watching me with a worried expression. Behind him were many others, who I assumed to be my friends and behind them, the warm sun. On the ground around me, tufts of grass pushed their way through the cracks of the concrete ground and not far from where I was, I saw several brick buildings.
 "How'd I end up back in Brooklyn?" I murmured.

> Davey chuckled and said, "Close enough. You're in Manhattan," he told me gently. With a start, I rushed to get to my feet, but as the blood rushed to my head, I got dizzy and had to lie back down. I looked around and saw what looked strangely like the distribution center. I took a better look at the clothes of the people surrounding me, which looked as though they had stepped right out of the movie. The sounds of clopping hooves brought me to a strange realization. I was in 1899.
 Before I passed out again, I remember thinking, "And I had just been getting used to that universe!"

> When I came to again, no longer was I in the sunlight and cool breeze. There was an old man with white hair and friendly blue eyes hovering over me with a worried expression. "Copper?" he asked cautiously, as though the sound of my voice would cause me to break or something.
 "Yeah?" I asked feebly.

> "How are ya feelin'?" I heard a voice ask. I couldn't see who it was but I tried desperately to figure it out. Luckily, Luna identified her for me.
 "Ace! Whaddya doin' heah?! We told youse ta stay downstairs!" Luna

>reprimanded.
 "Yeah, but I wanna see how Coppah is!" Ace whined. I grinned. It's nice when people care.

> "Aw, let her stay," Cone said in Ace's defense. She gave Ace a smile while Luna sighed dramatically.
 "Oh, all right, I guess." She gave Ace a look and warned her. "But if you get sick, it's all yer fault." Ace stuck her tongue out at Luna in return.

> By now, I had realized that Patch, Apple and Pearl were also in the

room. It's kinda hard not to notice the person who's shoving food down your throat (Patch), putting soaking wet towels on your head (Pearl) and making a fuss over you (Apple). Kloppman interrupted my thoughts when he announced he was going downstairs. I nodded before realizing I had a question.
 "Wait!" I called.

> "Yes?" he asked.
 "Where'd everyone go?" I asked.

> Kloppman sighed. "Don't tell me you don't remember what you do."
 Blankly I stared at him. "I do something?" Luna groaned.

> "Yer a newsy!" Ace squeaked, as if that made all the difference in the world. Actually, it did.
 "I am?!" I yelled. "But whe-wha-how?!"

> Apple sighed. "Anuddah time. Right now, youse gotta get bettah."
 I ignored Apple and asked, "So everyone's sellin'?" They all nodded. "Cool!" They obviously had no understanding of that term. It was clear from their vacant expressions.

> "Cool?" Pearl asked.
 "Yeah, it means phat. Awesome. Neat?" Seeing as they were still confused, I tried one more. "Good?"

> "Oh!" Patch exclaimed. "Cool. Cool. Cooool."
 "Uh, yeah," I said. What did I start?! Now all of them were trying it out!

> "Yo man, cool boy," Luna said, making little gangster motions.
 "Uh, no. Don't do dat. Dat ain't supposed ta happen till like 1990,," I suggested.

> "It's 1899..." Apple said slowly.
 "And so it is!" I said quickly. No use in confusing them (and myself) anymore then we already were. "I'm kidding?" I asked, as if they should've known that.

> "Oh." They chuckled nervously as I thought to myself, "Good going! Why don'tcha give 'em a coupla more reasons ta stick you in da loony bin? Eh, bettah sooner dan latah," I reasoned.
 Just then, a person thundered up the stairs and broke the awkward silence. "I sold papes today!" July announced.

> Shocked, Patch asked, "Why?!"
 "She felt so bad 'bout Coppah, and so did we, so we sold extra papes so we could get her a doctah," Jewel explained, following July in.

> Quickly, I put in my two cents. "Oh, ya don't have ta do dat. Really. I'm fine!"
 "Are ya shuah?" Pearl asked.

> "Positive!" I scoffed. Really. I was! "So uh, where're the guys?"
 "Translation: Where's Davey?" Cone teased.

> "Shut up!" I yelled at the now laughing bunkroom. Yeah, so I was laughing along, but still!
 Just then, I saw Jewel snicker as I heard, "Hey Coppah. Feelin' better?" I turned around to see Davey as Luna said loud enough for me to hear, "If she wasn't, I know what would!"

> Apple started giggling which caused a chain reaction. "Please ignore my bubbleheaded friends," I said to Davey, while shooting a dirty look at my now hysterical friends. Davey gave me a weird look while gesturing towards the floor dwellers and I shrugged. I was pretty sure my face was more than blushing rose. Beyond that. Way beyond that.
 "Can I talk to you for a second?" he asked.

> Puzzled, I replied, "Shuah."
 He looked around for a place that we could talk privately, but seeing as how the room was beginning to fill up with newsies, there was none. I looked at my watch. 7:33. Sounds about right for the newsies to start coming home. I looked back up just as Clink walked in.

> "Hey Coppah! My fav'rite turkey!"
 Davey gave me a curious look and I just grinned sheepishly. Clink began walking over to me while twirling Jake's hat and I waited for her to reach me when someone grabbed my arm, pulled me to the window and pushed me out. Good thing there was a fire escape there.

> "Go up," David commanded. I was extremely confused, but I obeyed.

As I climbed up the stairs, I heard Clink mutter something then the window closed with a dull thud.
 My curiosity got the better of me as Davey climbed up to the roof, where I was sitting on a crate that I had overturned and I asked him, "Whatsa mattah?"

> He looked at me and shook his head with a smile. "Nothing's wrong. Just needed ta ask ya something, an' I couldn't ask ya in there."
 "Oh, ok." There was an awkward silence as I wondered what he wanted to ask me. Of course, there was the obvious question. And then some. Ya know the saying "Curiosity killed the cat?" Well put it this way. If I was the cat, I'd be dead. I was beginning to think he had forgotten his question and was about to ask him when he took a deep breath.

> "Ok, there's this girl I like, and her birthday's coming up. I wanna get her something special cause I'm gonna ask her out. I have no idea what to get her though. I figured I'd ask you, because...well...you know what people like."
 "Uh huh. When's her birthday?"

> He grinned sheepishly and said, "Tomorrow."
 I stared at him in disbelief. "The girl's birthday is tomorrow and you're getting the present today?"

> "Pretty much."
 I gave him my famous "Whatsa-mattah-with-you?!" look before going on. "She a newsy?" I asked. He nodded and I realized which girl he liked. Strange how I adapt to my surroundings so well. There was only one person whose birthday was coming up that was a newsy.

> "Wisecracks?" I asked nonchalantly.
 He looked at me in surprise. "How'd ya know?" he asked, looking at me earnestly.

> "I just know these things," I said, as if it were no big deal. Inside, I wanted to cry but somehow I managed to refrain myself from doing so. A miracle in itself considering the situation. "So anyways, the best thing you can do is give her flowers-not roses. Maybe violets and buttercups. The other thing you should get her is a book. I know she loves to read, so maybe get her something like "Oliver Twist" or "David Copperfield" by Charles Dickens, but like a special edition or leather-bound," I suggested. "She'll appreciate
it."

> He gave me one of his grins and said, "I don't know what I'd do without you!"
 "Ya seem ta be doing pretty well so far," I muttered under my breath.

> "What?"
 "Oh, nothing," I said quickly. "Just talking to myself." I smiled to reassure him everything was fine (far from it) and shrugged. Then he remembered something else.

> "Can ya do me one more favor?" he asked.
 "Shuah, why not?" I decided. If ya can't beat 'em, join 'em. "What is it?"

> "I wanna take her dancing, but I'm afraid I can't dance."
 "So I've noticed," I muttered.

> "What?"
 "Sorry. It's been a bad day what with passin' out and all. Just ignore me."

> "K. So can ya teach me to dance?"
 "Yeah, it's not like I have anythin' bettah ta do." Just a tad bit jealous. A smidge. Not even. Ah, who am I kidding. Darn you Wisecracks!

> I looked back up at him and realized he was waiting for something. "What?" I asked cautiously, thinking he was gonna ask me more stuff.
 "Teach me?"

> "Now?"
 "Well...her birthday is tomorrow. I think it's probably gonna look better if I know how to dance before instead 'a aftah."

> "Good point." I got up and stood in front of him. "Put your left hand around my waist and put your right hand out like this." I showed him what to do and as he touched me, I felt a slight shock. I put my

hand on his shoulder and my other hand in his outstretched palm.

"Ok, now all you wanna do is step with your right foot back, bring the other foot back, right foot to your side, follow with the left, step forward with the right and follow with the left, then take the left and step to your left and follow with your right. That'll make a box."

> As the dance lesson went on, I tried to ignore the tingly feelings I had, as he learned to let his body relax so it wasn't so stiff. Within time, I taught him how to waltz, spin and dip. Ok, so he wasn't the best dancer, but he'd survive one night of dancing.
 After a considerable amount of time had passed, I looked at my watch and realized, we had been dancing for an hour and a half. No wonder the stars and moon were out. It was a beautiful night, no clouds in sight. It would've been so incredibly romantic except for one small thing. The guy I happened to like liked someone else.

> "Um, ya bettah go," I said just as he gasped, "Look at the time! I gotta fly!"
 "Just don't forget yer wings," I cracked with a slight smile.

> He grinned. "That's what I love aboutcha. Your sense of humor." He leaned over and gave me a quick kiss on the cheek. "Thanks for everything. You're a great friend."
 "Yeah, and dat's all I'll evah be," I muttered under my breath.

> "What?"
 "Oh, nothing," I said with a forced smile. "Just tawkin' ta myself."

> "Oh, ok," he grinned. "See ya!"
 I waited until I knew he was gone before hitting myself in the head. "Stupid, stupid, stupid!" I scolded myself.

> I took a minute to get back to normal (well, as normal as can be for me) and then I climbed down the escape, back into the bunkroom. All eyes were awaiting me and the silence was so loud, you could hear a pin drop. Hard to believe only a second ago, they were all yapping loudly.
 "Well?" Owl said expectantly.

> "Well what?" I asked.
 "What did he want?" West asked, from Race's lap.

> "Just needed some help with the girl he likes," I replied.
 Specs gave Sweetwaters a weird look. "Who does he like?" he asked, confused.

> "Wisecracks."
 Boots looked at me. "What?! But I t'ought he liked-"

> "Wisecracks. He liked Wisecracks. Guess he's finally gonna ask her out," Jack put in quickly. If I hadn't been so busy studying my lovely shoes, I might've seen Jack glare at him murderously.
 I looked up and saw Pearl's sympathetic face. "What happened?" she asked softly.

> I sighed and flopped down on my bed and shoved my pillow in my face as I lay with my backside up. Filly began playing with my hair and braiding it a few minutes later. I felt other people sit down next to me and I heard Lily say, "Can you guys leave us alone for a little bit?"
 Race's voice was easily recognized as he said, "Shuah. I'll see ya latah West." A kiss was heard, along with many others and the sound of the kisses made tears come to my eyes.

> As I stifled a sob, Daph said, "C'mon Coppah, we'se yer best friends, you can tell us."
 I looked at Daph out of the corner of my eye and sighed once more. Might as well tell them.

> "He likes Wisecracks. He wanted to know what ta give her for her birthday that would be special enough so he could ask her out. So he asked me what he should get her. Den he wanted ta know how ta dance, so I taught him."
 "Was dat what you were doin' da whole time?" Owl asked.

> "Pretty much."
 "Aww." Pearl of course.

> "We should just ignore Wisecracks and David den," suggested Flame.
 "Like we should ignore you an' Spot?" July muttered. Uh oh.

> "What's dat supposed ta mean?" Flame asked confused.
 Jewel sensed an argument brewing and stepped in. "What she means, Flame, is that she's liked him for a long time. She won't admit it, but she does."

> Flame looked at July. "Is dat true?" July shrugged. "Why didn'tcha tell me? I t'ought we was friends." She sounded just a bit hurt.
 July muttered, "I t'ought so too."

> Flame began cursing herself and didn't stop until Jewel yelled, "FLAME!" Flame looked at her and realized what she meant. "Sorry," she muttered. She looked back to July. "If you had told me ya liked him, I nevah woulda gone out wit' him. But ya nevah told me." She looked down at the floor.
 "Yeah, well--"

> "D'ya want me ta break up wit him? Because if it means dat much to ya, I will. It's only been a week."
 A week? Now I missed a week? "What day is it?" I whispered to Monday.

> "Not now," she whispered back, her eyes glued on the unfolding drama.
 Shady tapped Flame's shoulder. "If ya guys wanna hurt Spot or spite him, den I have an idea dat just might woik."

> Well if that didn't get there attention, I don't know what did.
 "Spot's only goin' out wit Flame ta make July jealous. An' it worked. If July went out wit' someone or pretended to, den Spot would get jealous. If I know da way he t'inks, he's gonna need a reason to break up wit Flame so he can get July, because we all know 'e wants her."

> Flame nodded. "So what reason should we give him?"
 Shady grinned. "Dat's wheah you get ta play. I don't t'ink Flame'll mind if she gets ta cheat on 'im wit a few guys. All she has ta do is make shuah Spot sees her."

> Flame grinned. "I like it. He used me, I get ta play him. Sounds good ta me."
 July gave Flame an honest grin. "Same heah."

> "Den do it!" Tink burst in excitedly.
 "But first, we need da guys. Who should we use?"

> "Can I make a suggestion?" asked Lily, an evil glint in her eye.
 "Shuah," said July as Flame nodded.

> "Well, I'se pretty shuah dat we can get one of our guys ta letcha kiss 'em," she said to Flame. "All youse gotta do is make shuah Spot sees it. We'll tell da guys ta flirt with ya in front'a him and we'll make it look like yer a slut. We'll pretend to get into fights wit our boyfriends, and dose of us dat are more jealous can pretend ta break up wit 'em unless it
works by den. Spot'll see all dis and decide ta break up wit her, and July'll be wit someone when he does. He's gonna get jealous and start tryin' ta steal her away. When he does, dey'll both be happy and whatevah."

> We sat there stunned. I think that's the most I ever heard from Lily at one time.
 "Well?"

> Murmurs of approval were heard and our plan went into action. "July, I can tawk Swifty inta bein' yer temp'rary boyfriend," Monday said.
 I lost track of what happened after that but from what I was able to conclude was that the boys were now in on the plan and they all liked it. Swifty and July were now going out (he made a big production of asking her out in front of Spot) and whenever they kissed, Spot would scowl. Flame would give him a kiss, then start flirting with whoever was around her.

> Since it was "socialization time," all the newsies were out. We went to a show at Medda's at the insistence of the guys and it actually wasn't too bad. Davey asked me to sit with him but I told him I had already told Ace and West I'd sit with them. Ok, so it

wasn't true. Not yet at least.
 I listened to Race's jokes for as long as I could (he was on the other side of West of course) before getting up and leaving. I noticed before that Flame and Jack had left together before, and now Shasta was talking to Spot.

> "D'ya know wheah Jack and Flame are?" she asked. Spot shrugged, busy watching July, sitting on Swifty's lap. "Come wit me ta find 'em?" He shrugged again, but got up, still watching July.
 Shasta saw me and grinned. She mouthed for me to follow them. So I did. I guess Shasta, Jack and Flame had already arranged where she could "walk in on them."

> They walked out to the lobby and I sat down on a bench in the lobby for a few minutes after Shasta motioned for me to sit. I watched as Shasta led Spot around, and when she motioned for me to join them, I came over and she pretended to have just seen me.
 "Coppah!" she exclaimed.

> "Hey!" I grinned. Spot said a cool hello as I asked Shasta what was going on, as if I didn't already know. Of course, I did.
 "We'se lookin' fer Flame an' Jack. D'ya know wheah dey are?" she asked. I shook my head. "Help us look foah dem?" I nodded. "T'anks." Spot just stood there, his thoughts on other things. Most likely, July.

> Shasta led us to a little room, off the sides of the lobby. There was a curtain concealing half the dark room, but you could easily make out the two figures. It was Flame and Jack, currently involved in a major liplock.
 Shasta gasped. Startled, Jack pulled away from Flame and exclaimed, "Shasta!"

> Tears formed in her eyes (what a great actress!) as she shook her head. She turned and half walked, half ran away. Jack jumped up and ran after her. Flame giggled nervously as Spot stared at her.
 "So, I guess ya wanna break up wit me."

> "I guess so," he said uncomfortably.
 Flame stood up. "Well, it was fun while it lasted." Spot nodded and she walked out. When she saw me, she grinned broadly and walked away. Coming down the stairs were July and Swifty, and Flame must've given her some sort of signal because July started grinning. She whispered something to Swifty and I guess she was telling him Flame and Spot broke up.

> Spot came out of the room a moment later, just as Swifty gave July a kiss and pulled her closer to him. Spot scowled and walked up to her. "Can I tawk ta ya?" he asked July.
 She shrugged, but winked at me. I gave her a slight smile before she turned back to Spot. I lost interest in them and walked over to Swifty.

> "It's really nice of ya ta do dat fer her," I said.
 He grinned. "I don't mind. It's kinda fun." I grinned back.

> "Wanna go see wheah Shasta and Jack disappeared to?"
 "Shuah."

> We walked around and talked. He was pretty cool actually. We talked about a lot of stuff, when all of a sudden, he said, "I t'ink Davey's bein' stupid. Yer a great person."
 That surprised me. "Oh, uh, thanks I guess." I smiled, although I wasn't sure what he was getting at.

> I guess he picked up on it because he said, "Don't worry. I'm not interested in ya dat way. I'se tawkin' ta ya as a friend."
 I grinned. "Thanks, dat's really sweet. One day, some girl's gonna be lucky ta have ya."

> "Ya t'ink so?"
 "I know so."

> Just then I heard voices. Shasta and Jack's voices more specifically.
 "I know dat it was only pretend, but when ya walked away, I felt so horrible," Jack said softly.

> "Aww," Shasta murmured. "I know how ya felt. When I saw you and Flame kissin', I felt like someone had stomped all ovah me heart, even dough I knew it weren't real."
 "I'm so sorry. Let's nevah do

dat again," Jack murmured.

> There was a silence, as I muttered, "Aw, can it already." Swifty chuckled. We walked around and saw Cone on Mush's lap, kissing him; West halfway asleep on Race's shoulder as he cracked jokes to a large group of people; Clink taunting Jake with his hat; Filly and Crutchy holding hands as they talked to Lily and Dutchy and Patch and Blink; Apple and Pie Eater with Specs and Sweetwaters, singing along to a song that Jewels and Bumlets played
on the piano. Most of the others were either listening to Race or off somewhere else.

> Just then, I yawned. "Swifty, can ya take me home?"
 He nodded. "Shuah."

> "Mind if I join ya?" a voice asked. It was Davey. Swifty gave me a questioning look.
 I shrugged. "Shuah, why not."

> The walk home was nothing much. Basically a lot of nonsensical chatter. They walked me in and I said, "Thanks. I think I'll go ta sleep now. Thanks fer walkin' me."
 Swifty said "No problem. Just feel bettah, k?"

> I nodded as Davey asked worriedly, "Whatsa mattah?"
 I looked at Swifty, not sure of what to say, but luckily he did it for me. "She passed out. Remembah?"

> Davey nodded. "Uh, can I talk to ya?"
 "Again?" I muttered, afraid he was gonna ask me something like, "What size ring does Wisecracks wear?"

> Swifty gave me a little army gesture and saluted me comically, before walking to the boys' bunkroom. Davey waited till he was out of earshot.
 "D'ya think she'll like it?"

> I rolled my eyes. "She'll love it."
 Davey's mouth curved into a little smile. "What?" I asked.

> "You're jealous, aren't you?" he said.
 "What? Me? Of course not!" I scoffed. "I'm shuah you an' Wisecracks'll be very happy togeddah. Besides, shouldn't you be walking instead of spewin' off at da mouth? If I remembah correctly, aren'tcha da walkin' mouth?"

> He grinned. "Yer jealous!"
 "I am not!"

> "You are!"
 "Right, I'm so jealous of a girl who's being asked out by a guy that gets hit on by older guys." Said with just a hint of sarcasm.

> "He wasn't hitting on me!" Davey exclaimed.
 "Mm-hmm," I said.

> "He wasn't!"
 "Good night David," I said coldly, as I closed the girls' bunkroom door in his face. I walked over to my bed and flopped down on it. It wasn't long before I fell asleep.

> "Coppah, wake up."
 "Huh?" My eyes opened as I rolled over to see July.

> "Guess what!" she said excitedly.
 I looked at my watch. 11:40. "What?" I asked sleepily.

> "Remembah when Spot wanted ta tawk ta me?" I nodded. At the moment there were two of her. No, I wasn't drunk. That's what happens when you fall asleep with contacts on. How else can you explain my waking up every morning on the bus and seeing two schools? No, I'm not delusional. Really.
 I blinked again. Ok, now there was only one of her. Much better. "So what happened?" I asked.

> "Well, he wanted me ta go tawk ta him, so I did. We ended up in dis room off da side of da lobby and dere was a bench. I sat down an' asked him what he wanted. He looked at me wit dose gorgeous eyes an' asked me if I was happy wit' Swifty. I shrugged and he sat down next ta me. He kinda leaned closah ta me an' asked why I was wit Swifty when I coulda done so much bettah. So I asked him how I coulda done bettah and he said dere were people like him. He was gettin' kinda close ta me so I got up and stood in da middle of da room. He got up also and began walkin' closah ta me. So I walked backwuhds ta get

away from him but I ended up against da wall. He grabbed me arms an' held dem up against da wall so I couldn't get away from him. He leaned up against me and said, 'If ya tell me dat ya don't feel nuttin', den I'll back off.' He kissed me real long an' hard, an' I wanted ta melt but I didn't.
 "When 'e let me go, he looked at me wit dose beautiful eyes an' asked if I felt anyt'ing. I was 'bout ta stay sumt'in', but I remembahed ah plan an' told 'im not really. He muttached sumt'in but I dunno what, den he walked away. But he kissed me!"

> I gave a slight smile. "Dat's great!" I said tiredly.
 She noticed my pathetic condition. "Whatsa mattah?"

> "Nuttin' dat can't be fixed," I said.
 She shrugged. I'm not the kind of person to depress others with my problems. Usually I'll just ignore it and hope it goes away if it's something major. The minor stuff I don't care about. This would bug me for a while I knew, but I wasn't about to dwell on it.

> "Um July?" I asked.
 "Yeah Coppah?"

> "I kinda wanna go ta sleep..."
 "Oh shuah! I just wanted ta tell ya because ya listen an' don't make me feel bad 'bout anythin. Dat's why yer such a good friend. T'anks!"

> I nodded as she jumped up. There was that good friend thing again. Was that all I was? At my funeral, was everyone gonna say, "Poor Coppah. She was such a good friend. Always listened ta ya and nevah really complained." I don't wanna be like that! I wanna be remembered as fun! Crazy! Awesome! But obviously, that ain't gonna happen. I might as well get used to being the good friend who everyone can rely on ta be there for them.
 I sighed as I leaned back against my pillow. I closed my eyes and instantly fell asleep.

>
* * * * *

>
 "Up! Get up! Ya gotta carry da bannah!" Kloppman yelled.

> Getting up was no problem for me, as it usually isn't on a weekday. I wake up easily when I know I have something important or necessary to do.
 I had slept in a tank top and shorts so as I buttoned a shirt over my tank top and grabbed my pants to change into, I heard Monday and Cake have the following conversation.

>
Cake: Get up and carry da what?

>Monday: Da bannah.
Cake: What's da bannah?

>Monday: *groans* Cake, you ditz!
Cake: Hey! I resent dat!

>Monday: D'ya even know what resent means?!
Cake: *glares before stomping off*

>
 "Ahh. Welcome to a typical mornin," Daph muttered from her pillow. I chuckled as I walked around peeling people apart from their beds. Out of all of them, July looked the most dead. When I saw her, I couldn't help but laugh. She looked so funny all sprawled out with her head almost hanging off the bed.

> "C'mon, get up schmuck."
 "Leave me alone Coppah!"

> "Why, so you can stay heah 'stead a makin' Spot jealous?"
 "All right, all right. I'se gettin' up!" She glared at me while I gave her my most angelic face, causing her to giggle.

> I finished making the rounds and decided to put on a pair of long shorts. It was August 9th (Wisecracks' birthday) after all! I woulda worn 'em shortah, but it was 1899 and I don't think it was very appropriate to do that. Actually, wearing pants prolly wasn't appropriate back then, so who cares?
 When I came down, the couples were already busy greeting each other in whatever way they deemed appropriate.

> "Oh please. Not befoah breakfast," I muttered.
 Filly glared at me. I shrugged it off. I trooped into the dining room and got a bowl of hot oatmeal.

> "Look Mush, yer so delicious, even Coppah's eatin' ya!" Cone giggled.
 "Of all da stupid jokes..." I muttered.

> "Hi!" a voice exclaimed. I whirled around. Who else could it be other than my dear friend Wisecracks? At the moment, I wasn't too fond of her, but she didn't need to know that. 'Sides-we're friends and that's all that matters.
 "Hey! Happy boithday!" I called back. I walked over to her and gave her a hug and said, "I'm shuah dis day'll be as mem'able fer you as it will be fer me."

> She looked at me confusedly. "What d'ya mean?"
 "Uh, nuttin, just dat it's yer boithday an' boithdays are special days fer friends too."

> "Oh." Wisecracks grinned. "T'anks Coppah! Yer such a good friend!"
 Again with the good friend. Ai. Somebody might as well shoot me now.

> I looked around to see if there was anyone worth talking to, but they were all in groups and talking like crazy. Just then I saw Davey heading towards us and I muttered, "I t'ink I'd bettah go. He looks like 'e wants ta tawk t'you. I'll see ya latah."
 I left Wisecracks and unfortunately there was only one exit, which meant I'd have to pass Davey himself. I created a path between merging people and hoped he had stayed with Wisecracks. No such luck.

> "Hey Coppah! Hold up! Man, ya look like yer tryin' ta get away from someone!"
 No! Really?! "What made ya t'ink dat?" I muttered.

> He ignored me and continued. "I just wanted ya to know that I'm sorry fer what I said last night. Whatevah yer feelings were, it was dumb of me to make those kinda comments."
 He looked at me hopefully and I shrugged. "Whatevah." He looked a little hurt but I shrugged it off. "I gotta go. I promised Tink I'd sell wit her."

> Quickly I exited the room, found Tink and asked her to do me a favor.
 Puzzled, she asked "What is it?"

> "Nuttin'. Just sell wit me today?"
 "Dat's it? Shuah."

> "T'anks."
 I wandered off and ended up at the distribution center. Seeing as how it wasn't open yet, I sat down on the loading dock. The sunlight felt warm against my bare skin and the sky was a beautiful shade of azulean blue. I wished anything that I could just stretch out and lay in the sun like that forever, but a girl stretched out in the middle of a dock off a busy street could bring some unwanted opportunities. I piled my hair underneath my hat and pulled it down low, hoping that no one could tell that I was a girl. My clothes were loose enough to conceal my body, now all I had to do was find a place to sleep. The others wouldn't be arriving for at least an hour, which would give me time to sleep a little.

> I found a corner off to the side of the loading dock that had plenty of sun, grabbed some newspapers to lie on and promptly fell asleep. It was all getting to be a bit much for me.

> * * * * *

> "Hey! Lookie heah! It's a new kid!"
 I opened my eyes and blinked. Oscar. Just what I needed.

> "Morris! 'E's up!" He turned back to me. "Who're you?"
 "Who am I? Last I checked, I was me."

> "Hey, da kid thinks he's funny! He ain't so funny dough, ain't he?" Oscar pulled me up by my arm, causing my hat to fall off. I grabbed it as it fell and I must say I thoroughly enjoyed the look on his face when he realized who I was.
 "Shove it Oscah." I walked away and ended up walking right into Swifty.

> "So we meet again! Did he boddah youse last night?" Swifty asked concernedly.
 "Nuttin' dat couldn't be handled. Are de oddahs heah?" Swifty nodded. "Guess I'd bettah find Tink den." I started walking away but he pulled my arm.

> "Ya shuah yer okay Coppah? Ya don't look too good."
 "I'm fine.

Really. Don't worry 'bout me." I grinned, then walked off.

> The rest of the day up to a point went by in a blur. I don't remember what the headlines were, much less what I had for lunch. I felt like I was watching instead of living it.
 Around 7:30, I came back into the lodginghouse after that long day of selling papes. Outside, on the street, July and Spot were busy making out. Can't say much for the other couples-they were pretty much doing the same thing.

> "Gag me wit' a stick, will ya?" I muttered to no one in particular.
 As I walked in, I heard, "Coppah!"

> I groaned. "Yeah Dave?"
 "I need ta talk ta you."

> "Again?"
 He smirked at me like he did Jack in the scene with Pulitzer. "Can ya come with me into the library fer a second?"

> Eh, what the hey. I began putting my hair in a ponytail as I followed him into the library but I heard "No don't. I like it better down," so I left it down. I'm a stupid idiot, I know, but I still liked him. Why can't the good stuff happen to me like my friends?! Gah!
 Having walked in slowly, dreading what he wanted to tell me, I saw him standing against the edge of the desk, kinda leaning against it. "Yeah?" I asked.

> He gave me a shy grin. "Come here." I took a step closer. "A little more. Oh for Pete's sake! Just come here!"
 "Whaddya want?"

> "Happy birthday." He handed me a bouquet of flowers - buttercups, violets, posies, lilacs and tiger lilies. In the middle of it all was an exquisite blue rose and he pulled it out for me. "A sweet smelling rose for the sweetest girl I know."
 I'm sure I was gaping. "B-but my birthday was two months ago."

> He pushed himself off the desk and stood up straight. "I know. June 13th. But I was too terrified ta even talk ta you."
 "Really?"

> "Yeah. But I'm not done yet." He pulled out a box that was covered in brown paper. He handed it to me and I just stared at it. "Open it," he said with a warm grin.
 Gingerly, I peeled away the paper, then the box cover. In it was a leather-bound copy of "David Copperfield." I ran my fingers along the delicate seams, and realized there was something under it. I pulled the book up and found an amazing journal, leather-bound as well, with stars and crescent moons embossed into the leather.

> "Open it," he said softly.
 I looked at him in amazement. There were twinkles in his light blue eyes and he nodded. When I opened it, there was a portrait of me on the inside cover, done all in charcoal.

> "You drew this?" I gasped. "It's beautiful."
 "It's only beautiful because you're beautiful." He looked at me, then gave me a soft kiss, one I'll never forget. When he pulled away, he grinned. "I've wanted to do that for a long time."

> I smiled back. "Yer not the only one."
 Our eyes met again and he said, "Go upstairs. There's somethin' waitin' for you." I looked at him curiously then ran up the stairs to see what else there was. Laid out on my bed was this incredible midnight blue ballgown. It had fitted sleeves that flared out from the elbow, a square cut neckline, a fitted bodice and a laced back. A pair of matching delicate blue boots lay in a box next to it. I gasped and heard the sound of laughter.

> "Ya like?" Daph asked.
 "Like?! I love it!" I exclaimed.

> "He had us set it up fer you," Cone explained.
 "You guys are incredible! I love you!"

> "Dat we know. Now I suggest ya get ready because I know he's waitin'!" Patch grinned.
 I had to take a shower of course, after selling papes and getting dirt all over me. As the hot water ran down my body and soothed my anxious soul, I wondered where we were going.

Where did he have enough money to buy me all this? Where did the dress and shoes come from?

> Five minutes later, I grabbed a towel and wrapped it around myself. They called Filly over to do my hair and in the shortest time possible, my long curly hair that had turned red in the sunlight cascaded down my back with a section of hair on both sides twisted into a half ponytail. All that was left was the dress.
 I couldn't help but smile as they helped me put the delicate silk dress on. Ya gotta understand something. I'm your basic tomboy-never wear dresses or skirts. I'll get dirty with no complaints, can scale the average tree and play almost every sport imaginable. So for me to be so googoogaga over a dress means it's pretty gorgeous.

> By now, almost all my friends had come over to see my transformation from Copper to whatever it was that I was.
 "Wow Coppah, you look so pretty!" commented Jewel.

> "Gonna knock 'im right outta his shoes," said Sweetwaters.
 "Just like a princess," murmured Lily.

> Shasta tapped me on the shoulder. "Ya bettah get goin' Coppah! It's already 8:10! Da party starts at 9:00!"
 "Party? What party?" I asked curiously.

> "Oops!" Shasta covered her mouth while Owl hit her.
 "Good going Shasta," she muttered.

> "Wait, what party?"
 "Da party Davey's throwin' fer ya," Owl said matter of factly. "It's a surprise party fer you. Ya weren't supposed ta know, so don't tell him you know. Now get goin'!"

> "Uh Coppah?"
 "Yeah Shady?"

> "Yer shoes?"
 "Oh! Thanks!" I ran to put them on and tripped over the long skirt.

> "Here's an idea! Hold da skirt up next time!" Flame teased.
 "Dere won't evah be a next time," I muttered, causing them all to laugh.

> "Go get 'im Cowgirl!" cheered Daphne.
 "What? Daph!" scolded Pearl. "She ain't no cowgoil! She a queen!"

> "Sor-ry!"
 "Ya goin'?" asked Clink.

> "Uh...yeah," I said.
 "Can I announce ya?!" Tink asked.

> "Yeah can we?" asked Ace.
 "Uh shuah?" They squealed with delight and ran downstairs. If ya hadn't noticed. I was kinda in a daze. I heard the sound of a harmonica (was it supposed to be in place of a trumpet?) and West pushed me towards the stairs.

> "Go on girl!" she said. I looked at her with butterflies in my stomach and she said "It'll be fine."
 As I walked down the hollow wooden stairs, my heels clacked against the hardwood. Since the stairs created a U, when I reached the landing, Davey looked up from his conversation and saw me.

> "Wow," he breathed softly.
 I grinned. "Ya like?"

> His mouth curved into a grin. "Like? I love it! You look incredible!"
 I giggled, giddy on the day's happenings. Race looked at me queerly. "Are ya okay Coppah?" he asked worried.

> "Me? Nevah been bettah," I grinned.
 "Coppah! Wait!" Filly exclaimed. I was on the second to last step and I turned around to see her, but it was too late. She ran right into me and I fell backwards into someone's strong arms. I breathed a sigh of relief when I realized I was only horizontal instead of crumpled up.

> "He didn't fall ovah!" Clink said in amazement. "Guess he does have some muscles!"
 I glared at her. She was on the landing. Davey was still holding me. Bit of a disadvantage there.

> "Flame hit her fer me."
 "Gladly." Flame hit Clink.

> "Ow!"
 "Well, ya deserved it!" I gave her my angelic face as she muttered some obscenities.

> Davey pushed me up easily, then grabbed my hand and twirled me.

"Whoa!" I gasped. He grinned.
 "Nice moves mouth!" Jack admired.

> "Coppah taught me," he said with a proud grin. Jack rolled his eyes and Shasta hit him.
 "Be nice!" she scolded playfully.

> "Aw, do I have to?" he teased as he leaned in for a kiss. I turned away from them just in time.
 "Coppah, wait! Put dis in yer hair!" Filly exclaimed. "Da finishin' touch!" She had cut the stem of a violet and she put it in my hair. "Much bettah," she declared.

> "It suits ya. Maybe I oughta start callin' ya Violet instead of Coppah," Davey teased.
 I hit him playfully as I said "Don't you dare!" but before I could actually hit him, he grabbed my elbow and pulled me in for a quick kiss.

> "Gag me," Clink muttered.
 "JAKE!" I yelled. He ran up the stairs to where she was and kissed her so she couldn't talk. "THANK YOU!"

> "Now there's just one thing missin'," Davey proclaimed.
 "There is?" I said puzzled. What else could there be?

> "Yep. Close yer eyes." I did. "Hold yer hand out." Did that too. I felt something small drop into my palm. "Open 'em."
 In my hand was a delicate locket in the shape of a dolphin (my favorite animal in case you didn't know). There was a delicate lock on the side of the locket and it looked as though it needed a key.

> "What's in it?"
 He smirked. "Maybe I'll show ya lata."

> I pouted. "Aw, c'mon Davey, tell me what's in it!"
 "Maybe if ya give me a kiss..." he trailed off.

> "Do I have to?" I teased.
 "If ya wanna know what's in it, yeah."

> "Oh fine. Guess it can't be dat bad!" I grinned. I gave him a kiss and a moment later the lock swung open. On one side was a picture and on the other was him. It was all engraved and done with intricate detail.
 I gasped and looked back at him. "Where'd ya get da money fer all dis?!"

> "Basically in an inheritance from my uncle in Poland. He had a successful newspaper, which he owned, and the money went to me, Les and Sarah. Papa won't have ta work anymore, but me and Les stayed because we loved sellin' papes."
 "Does anyone else know?"

> "Just Jack. I almost told Conlon but I figured I'd wait an' see how things worked out with you."
 "Oh." I nodded as the information he had just told me sank into my brain.

> Davey grinned. "Now if you'll excuse me, I must take a certain lovely lady to a party."
 "Not at all. Yer excused," I said smiling as I took his offered arm. He led me out into the cool night air as I thought, "I guess Cinderella's finally goin' to da ball."

>
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>

> The trees shuddered and the leaves fluttered in the brilliant light of the dimming sun. It bathed the street in its light and a pigeon cooed from a building rooftop. I turned my face upwards to view the fading day and the colors that appeared. All the way at the top, you saw the dark blue colors welcoming the night with its dazzling stars and pale crescent moon beginning to illuminate the darkly tinged sky.

> Its lighter colors slowly faded into a deep blue as a wind blew through the street. It chilled me to the bone and I shivered. Davey looked at me with concern. "Are ya cold?"

> "No. Uh...a little. Okay, yeah." He grinned and took off his jacket and put it around my shoulders. As he leaned over to cover me, a lock of curly hair fell into his eyes and I couldn't help but push it away. His eyes twinkled and he said "C'mon, we're almost there." I

nodded as I pulled his jacket tighter around me.

> A minute later, we entered the lobby of Irving Hall. The lights were off and the only sound was of silence. "Uh Davey, are you shuah da party-"

> "SURPRISE!" yelled an array of voices. I almost fell backwards in my shock. In all the night's events, I had forgotten about my party.

> "Ya like?" Davey asked. I nodded, my eyes were still wide in shock. He grinned and with a chuckle led me around. All of my friends were there with their significant others if they had one, and all the girls looked so beautiful in their gowns (which I later found out was part of Medda's collection) and the guys were looking like wealthy heirs to a millionaire, clad in their finest suits and tuxedos. As I went to talk to people, Davey went over to Medda to thank her for everything.

> "July, dis is so incredible!" I said half in awe as I admired the finely dressed room in its drapes, flowers and balloons.

> She grinned as she leaned back into Spot's chest. "Ya desoive it!"

> Clink shrugged. "I still t'ink dat da turkey coulda done bettah dan him." I glared at her and she shrugged while Spot grinned.

> "Are dey always like dis?" he asked July.

> "Pretty much." He burst out laughing and Clink and I stopped our staredown to look at him in amazement.

> "I-is he laughin'?! " Clink asked in shock.

> "I-I t'ink so!" I whispered back.

> "What?" Spot asked. "Ain'tcha nevah seen me laugh?"

> "Not really," I said as Clink said "No."

> "Really?" We nodded. "Oh." He shrugged and pulled July away to go off somewhere, leaving me and Clink to continue our staredown. It was going quite well too until a sharp finger poked me in the back.

> "Ow!" I yelped. I spun around to see Pearl giggling. I glared at her too.

> "I jist wanted ta say hi," she said.

> "By pokin'?"

> "Well dey don't call me Pokin' Pearl fer nuttin!"

> "Ya got a point dere, as much as I hate ta say it." Pearl grinned before poking me again. "OW!" She twirled off before I could hit her back. Clink was snickering. "Oh shaddup ya chicken," I muttered. I walked away and found myself walking right into 'Cracks.

> " 'Ey Coppah!"

> " 'Ey 'Cracks!"

> "How ya doin'?"

> "I'se pretty good, you?"

> "Well..." I had the feeling she was about to launch into one of her nonsensical speeches and tuned her out before she could. The band was just beginning to play and they were quite good, but not my style of music.

> "Wouldn't it be great if "Hate This Place" by the Goo Goo Dolls started playing?" I murmured to myself.

> "Goo goo who?!" Davey asked as he walked up to me.

> "Uh...a band."

> "Oh." Davey shrugged then smiled. "Can I have da first dance?"

> "A'coise!" I grinned.

> He led me out to the dance floor and as we began dancing the steps I had taught him, a small crowd formed around us. As he spun and dipped me, several of the guys whooped and hollered. I couldn't help but grin and when the song ended, they erupted into cheers and

applause.

> "When'd ya loirn ta dance?" Race yelled as he squeezed West's hand.

> Davey grinned. "Coppah!" he yelled back. I blushed and Shasta murmured to Jack "Aw how sweet, she's blushin'!" I decided she needed a glare too. At that moment my only thoughts were "Who else wants the death look?!"

> As the next song began, Davey grinned and kissed the top of my nose. "Be my girl?" I nodded happily. As the evening progressed, we twirled around, lost in each other's arms, in our own world as the hours and minutes melted away. We didn't notice the hushed whispers heard all around us and we didn't see our friends leave. Pretty soon, it was only the two of us in the middle of the floor still dancing and talking while everyone had left.

> "David?" Medda called.

> He looked up. "Yeah?"

> "Everyone's left."

> "Dey have?!" I asked in surprise. She nodded. "Oh wow, what time is it?!"

> "It's one in the morning. You should start going back. You have a long day tomorrow." For once, Medda looked her age and actually very motherly.

> I nodded. "We will. T'anks Medda." Davey grinned and as we walked out of the hall, she turned the lights out so that she could finally go to sleep. "I can't believe it's dat late," I said as we walked out.

> "Me neither." He grinned. "But I'm glad. I spent it with you." Well if that doesn't make a girl blush, I don't know what does!

> "Me too. Well, I mean I'm glad I spent it wit ya." I grinned sheepishly (can anyone say "Baaa"?). We walked along for a couple of minutes talking quietly as we held hands. Then he stopped for a minute.

> "Coppah, wanna go to the park for a second?" he asked.

> "Central? Or Washington Square Park?" We were near both, so we could go to either.

> "Central. I wanna show you something."

> "Ok." I shrugged and we headed uptown to Central Park. Horses clopping in the streets could be heard and the pale moonlight lit up the streets as we walked through them. A few shouts were heard here and there but we ignored them because it was the shouts of disgruntled men being thrown out of a bar. We had no business with those kinds of people.

> We reached Central Park and turned to go into it, admiring the white marble statue of a man on a horse at one of the park entrances. Instead of walking on the road, we chose to walk on the grass as we lazily swung our hands of which our fingers were still intertwined.

> We walked towards one of the many ponds and streams in the park and we sat down on the grass beside it. It was a balmy night, with a cool breeze offering a relief of air. I leaned against his chest and we just talked, until I fell asleep there in the grass.

> * * * * *

> "Copper wake up," Davey's voice whispered. I opened my eyes and blinked. I had fallen asleep in his arms in the grass and we faced the water which held a dazzling view of the sunrise above. The ripples caused by the wind created a picture worth a thousand words as we watched the sun climb higher and higher into the sky. The colors were so brilliant and it was nothing like I'd ever seen.

> "It's beautiful," I breathed softly. "Did you know about this?"

> Davey nodded his head. "When I was younger, I used to sit on the docks at the harbor and think about things that were bothering me or confused me. I always found it easier to think when I watched the water and saw the waves coming in and rocking the boats. The sunrises and the sunsets were the best part. They always reminded you that there was something bigger out there and you never lost touch with reality."

> I looked at him with a newfound respect. Whatever had been there before had only been improved on. "I nevah had da chance ta do dat," I said quietly. "I was always rushin' to get someplace, to go somewheah. I didn't care wheah, I just had to be someplace else."

> Davey looked at me, thoughtful contemplation reflecting into his eyes. "Why?" he asked.

> "I don't know. I just couldn't stay in one place. I was always runnin' from one place to anuddah. I'm shuah I hurt people in da process but it was too hard for me to stay. 'Sides, I nevah had a reason. I always dreamt of going someplace biggah, somewheah wheah I can make my dreams come true. It never occurred to me dat some things are in front of you the whole time, you just don't see them.

> "Like this pond. I nevah knew about it. Not until you brought me heah. I nevah woulda known about it neiddah because I don't give things a chance. What I see at first is what stays with me. But now I know there are some things worth staying for. Manhattan is such a busy place, always bustlin' wit people goin' somewheah an' doin' somethin'. Time nevah stands still. But heah it does. It's da strangest feeling ta know that time can stand still in the middle of so much change." I looked at him, having just bared my heart and soul to him. No one else knew how my innermost feelings were and I only hoped that he would not feel as though he had to tell me something. I just felt comfortable telling him that and I hoped he understood.

> He nodded. "I know how ya feel. I always thought I was gonna get away from here and make it big somewhere. But I'm 17 and my life hasn't even started and I already know that I'm not going anywhere. The only way I would is if someone inspired me to."

> I grinned. "I thought I was the only one who felt like that!"

> "Nope!" He gave me a gentle kiss before saying, "So that makes two of us." I nodded. "Hey, here's an idea!"

> I looked at him curiously. "What is it?"

> "How's bout we make a pact. That no matter what happens between us, we'll stay friends and one day, we'll get out and see the world!" he declared, jumping up excitedly with his hands flying and expressing his words. "Rome, Paris, London, Moscow, all those places I've only read about in books!"

> I jumped up too. "We'll have ta take boat a'coise, but wheah are we gonna get da money?!" Davey grinned. "Oh wait, problem solved." I grinned back at him. "When should we go?"

> "How 'bout fer our 21st birthdays, we go out and see the world?"

> "Fine with me!" I said.

> "Good!" Our faces were beaming as we shook on it and then fell back into the grass. We looked back up to the skies to watch the sun's early rays shoot across the sky and as I sighed, I closed my eyes and promptly fell asleep again, dreaming of the wonders we'd see.

> * * * * *

> "Jessica?"

> "Huh?" I asked drowsily.

> "Are you okay?" a male voice asked.

> "Jack?!" I asked in a mass state of confusion.

> The man chuckled. "Try Gallacher."

> "Galla-GALLACHER?!" My eyes flew open and I saw my teacher standing over me. "What happened?! Where's Davey?! And Spot?!" I exclaimed.

> "Uh oh, now she's really lost it," murmured Laura. "She thinks she's living in Newsies time."

> "I was!" I protested. "I was just there!"

> "Uh huh. Still not believin' it," she said. I shook my head. As I looked around, I realized I was back in A200, the darling Humanities room with all my classmates there. Oh wait! Where was Jo? Was she still with Pierre?

> Just then the door opened. Jo walked through with the red pass in her hand. "Jo!" I exclaimed. "Where were you?!"

> She gave me a weird look. "In...the bathroom? Where were you?!"

> "She thinks she went back to 1899," Lauren commented. I shot her a dirty look. Jo started snickering.

> "What about Pierre?" I said, ignoring my lovely friends.

> "Pierre?" she repeated as if it meant nothing.

> "You know, the guy you ran off with!"

> "Guy? I ran off with?"

> "Uh huh."

> "Gallacher? I think she's finally lost it."

> "No seriously, I didn't!"

> "Uh huh. That's what they all say!"

> I realized I wasn't getting anywhere with this conversation and figured I'd better shut up before they had me committed to Plainview Asylum or something. I still had no clue what happened and as I looked up at the clock, I realize that the second hand on the clock had just passed twelve and it was now a minute past twelve. If what happened wasn't real, then only a second had passed since I last saw the clock. But how could that be?!

> I looked up on the board. Where "Davey and Jack: Friends? Or More?" had been, it now said "Walt Whitman: The King of All Poets". The first thing that came to mind was that Gallacher was on his "Walt Whitman's the best!" kick again, but then I realized there was something in my hair. I looked outside, and watched the snow come down as I disentangled the object from my hair. After I pulled the few pins out, a violet tumbled into my hand.

> I stared at it in disbelief. It was the same one that Filly had pinned in my hair and Davey had teased me about. As I held it in my hand and looked around at the class around me, I was hearing them, but I wasn't there. It felt so weird feeling as though I was there, but knowing I really wasn't.

> My mind played back the events of the last few days or the split second, whichever it may be and as I thought of all that happened, a pang of anger hit me because I was back in a place where I didn't feel as though I belonged. With the newsies, I knew I was one of them. Here it was every man (or woman) for themselves. I wanted to go back and my mind screamed to go back. But I couldn't. I was here. To remain. The question was for how long?

> I looked back up to the clock that had caused me to travel through time. There was no doubt about it. Where can you get a violet in the dead of winter other than a florist? And believe me, I don't know any florists. I remembered reading tales of old and wondered if there really was a such thing as a "witching" hour. If there was, I had definitely experienced it.

> Every single day after that, I have always watched the clock,
waiting for that second hand to twitch nervously as it did that cold,
snowy day. As I watched my breath well up on the glass, images played
in my mind, remembering my times with my friends, with Davey, with
the Newsies. I would never forget it. And maybe one day, I'll be able
to go back. But until then, I remain, avidly watching the second hand
slowly travel its way in a circle. Who knows. Maybe when that time
comes, the circle I am destined to travel on will be complete. And
I'll be ready.

> <p><p>

End
file.